



Ringing in the New Year with Conservation's New Farm Bill



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Highlights

by

Allen Green

State Conservationist

January 1st will not only bring a new year, but 2008 will also usher in a new Farm Bill.

The last five years of the previous Farm Bill were very productive for NRCS in Colorado, and as a result were very beneficial to the natural resources within the state.

Your hard work and dedication resulted in hundreds of conservation plans written that will enhance and improve the quality of the natural resources on more than 11 million acres.

We've also provided nearly \$200,000,000 in assistance through numerous financial and easement programs to Colorado landowners, farmers, and ranchers. And, although \$200,000,000 is a significant financial commitment to the state's agriculture and natural resource sustainability, it is just a piece of the pie.

The contributions and matching funds from state, local, and private landowners more than doubles the amount for conservation applied on private lands.

The last five years have also brought stewardship programs, grant opportunities, as well as enhanced technology, like our mobile irrigation labs and mobile field offices that will assist us in making conservation easier and getting some of our field office staff folks

back into the field.

The 2002 Farm Bill brought many innovative opportunities and challenges and we've met them all.

I'm proud of the works that we have done and accomplishments we've achieved over the last five years. And you should know that almost everywhere I go, landowners and partners take the opportunity to not only praise NRCS; but most importantly, they acknowledge the way Colorado employees go about carrying out the conservation mission.

As the New Year approaches, I wish everyone a happy holiday season and I look forward to all that the New Year (and a new Farm Bill) has in store.

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Coordinated Effort Treats Approximately 532 Acres of Tamarisk from Fremont to Bent Counties

By: Mary Miller, Public Affairs Specialist, Area 3



This helicopter was used to help treat the approximately 532 acres of tamarisk in Fremont, Pueblo, Huerfano, Otero, and Bent counties recently.

Many partners and funding sources helped treat approximately 532 acres of tamarisk in Fremont, Pueblo, Huerfano, Otero, and Bent counties recently, according to John Knapp, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Area Conservationist.

NRCS and its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Colorado Invasive Plant Program was one of the funding sources.

The EQIP Colorado Invasive Plant Program is a voluntary program for landowners who want to improve the productivity of range and riparian lands for agriculture and wildlife by reducing the impact of noxious weeds.

"We owe a special thank you to J.R. Phillips, manager of the Fremont County Weed Control Department," said Knapp. "J.R. coordinated the spraying with the landowners

and agencies in the various counties so that we could get the aerial applicator, who is from the West Slope, to do many projects in Southeastern Colorado at one time."

The chemical used for the projects takes three years to kill all parts of the tamarisk plant so that no re-growth occurs. After this time period, the tamarisk can be removed.

According to the Colorado State Forest Service, tamarisk contributes to the development of saline soil conditions, which thins out native plants.

Tamarisk stands are dense and impede the movements of both wildlife and livestock.

It also impairs the function of shallow water wetlands by lowering water tables, according to NRCS.

Tamarisk also causes issues with the maintenance of irrigation ditches and canals.

One to Grow On...



Look at everything as though you were seeing it either for the first or last time.

~ Betty Smith

A lot of people run full speed with incredible urgency in the wrong direction.

~ Justin Menkes

The difference between a mountain and a molehill is your perspective.

~ Al Neuharth

Be nice to people on your way up because you'll need them on your way down.

~W. Migner

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Always hold your head up, but be careful to keep your nose at a friendly level.

~Max L. Forman

It's not what you've got, it's what you use that makes a difference.

~ Zig Ziglar

The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude.

~Oprah Winfrey



Tri-County Biofuels Project Funded

by Kristi Gay, District Conservationist
Flagler Field Office

The Tri-County Biofuels project was born from discussion at a public meeting called by the Flagler Conservation District and East Central Colorado Resource Conservation and Development Council (ECCRCD) in February 2006.

The public meeting brought together 27 Flagler residents, Flagler town council members, community leaders, and local agricultural producers to discuss the feasibility of a biodiesel plant in the community of Flagler.

Out of this initial workshop, a core group of eight growers from Kit Carson, Washington, and Lincoln counties continued to meet periodically and brought together by their mutual interest in the possibility of growing oilseed crops for future local biodiesel production.

With assistance from ECCRCD Coordinator Jeff Koster, and local USDA-NRCS District Conservationist, Kristi Gay, the Tri-County Biofuels grower's group was officially formed with the purpose of utilizing Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) money available through USDA to plant 'farm sized' crop trials for a three-year



Tri-County Biofuels grower, Gene Brouwer with son Marion, and Marion's wife, Sherie, prepare to drill the first acres of winter camelina seed in western Kit Carson County north of Flagler, Colorado.

research project.

The goals of the project are to determine the economic feasibility and ease of establishing and growing camelina and canola crops in rotation with winter wheat.

Other goals of the project are to determine the feed value of the residual meal that remains after oil extraction.

The Tri-County Biofuels CIG was funded in July 2007 with the first winter camelina crop planted on September 7, 2007, by Tri-County grower, Gene Brouwer.

Camelina seed is tiny and required extra time to calibrate the Sunflower no-till drill. The seed is placed no more than one-quarter inch below the soil surface and timing is critical.

Both spring and winter varieties of camelina and canola are planned.

Agronomy assistance is being provided by Alan Helm, Agronomy/Weed Management Specialist, and Joel Schneekloth, Regional Extension Water Specialist, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.



And the Winner is....

Franktown Field Office....

....Oh My!!

From left to right: Deric Clemons, District Conservationist; Debbie Rigo, Civil Engineer; Eileen Rademacher, Assistant Administrator; Pam Brewster, District Manager; and Dan Nosal, Resource Management Specialist; all from Franktown, won the Area 2 Halloween Costume Contest. Their competitors included the Area 2 Office and other field offices located in Area 2.

NRCS and Basin States Provide Incentives for Small Acreage Landowners to Enhance Areas for Native Pollinators

by Katherine Burse-Johnson
Public Affairs Specialist and
Dan Thompson, Wildlife Biologist,
Grand Junction Field Office

Recent declines in European honey bee colonies have increased the need for native pollinators.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Basin States Parallel Program (BSPP) provide a voluntary conservation program for small acreage landowners with 3 to 10 acres of land to enhance areas for native pollinators.

"Over 70 percent of crops, such as cherries, apples, plums, and some varieties of peaches, depend on insects, also known as pollinators, to complete pollination," said Dan Thompson, Wildlife Biologist, NRCS Grand Junction Field Office.

Pollinators are key to the functioning of many terrestrial ecosystems because they



A bumblebee visits a purple coneflower.

enhance the reproduction of native plants that provide food and cover for numerous wildlife species, help stabilize the soil, and have the potential to improve water quality.

It has been calculated that one out of every three to four mouthfuls of food we eat and beverages we drink is delivered to us by pollinators.

As such, agricultural products that are produced with the help of pollinators make a significant contribution to the economy.

As a group, native pollinators are threatened worldwide by habitat loss, pesticides, disease, parasites, and the effects of invasive species both as

direct competitors and as negative influences upon pollinator habitat.

These threats to the sustainability of native pollinators and their habitat have serious economic implications for humans and for native ecosystem diversity and stability.

As such, agricultural products that are produced with the help of pollinators make a significant contribution to the economy.

Through EQIP and BSPP, eligible small acreage landowners will receive financial and technical assistance to install or implement structural and management practices that can promote native pollinators.

Incentive payments are offered for completion of eligible conservation practices, which may include establishing grass, forbs, shrubs, and trees, as well as other practices.

For more information, please contact Dan Thompson, Wildlife Biologist, USDA-NRCS, Grand Junction Field Office, 970-242-4511, ext. 130, or email him at daniel.thompson@co.usda.gov.



With the Sangre de Cristo mountains as backdrop at its October annual meeting, the Sangre de Cristo RC&D Council honored NRCS RC&D Secretary Kathy Trujillo (center) for her more than 22 years of service to the Council. Pictured with Kathy is Patricia Coffee, RC&D Secretary-Treasurer (right) and Jane Wustrow, RC&D Coordinator.

Congratulations to Mike Wall!

In his capacity as Resource Conservationist under Operations Planning, one of Mike Wall's many tasks is to provide guidance and information to the four Area Resource Conservationists for Technology.

A typical day for Mike might include anything from a question about SCIMS to what's keeping a user from uploading a Toolkit contract into ProTracts. Without fail, Mike replies to these and many other inquiries efficiently, promptly, and often humorously.

In addition, he is untiring in his promotion of technology-related workplace improvements, all meant to increase efficiency of field staff in their daily activities.

To recognize Mike for his work, assis-

tance, and organizational skills, the four Area Resource Conservationists for Technology presented him with a Certificate of Merit at a recent Technology Team meeting held in early December.



Area Resource Conservationists from left to right: Paul Weber (Area 2), Charlie Pannebaker (Area 3), Mike Wall, Marianna Young (Area 4), and Barb Cencich (Area 1).

Area 4 Celebrates Native American Month

On November 28th the Monte Vista Area Office celebrated Native American Month by having a potluck and inviting a guest speaker.

Over 25 people attended this informative event. Participants of the potluck were staff from Monte Vista Area Office, Monte Vista/Center/Alamosa Field Offices (FO), and Monte Vista/Center Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices.



Ron Riggensbach, District Conservationist, Alamosa and, Brenda Anderson, Center Conservation District, District Manager, review the Potawatomi Tribal Newspaper "HowNiKan."

Those in attendance included State Office FSA representatives; Brian and Danny Neufeld from the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts; Brenda Anderson, Center Conservation District Manager; and Ray Riggensbach, District Conservationist, Alamosa FO.

Ron Riggensbach and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, related the history of the now-Oklahoma-based Potawatomi tribe.

The Potawatomi are among the wave of Algonquian-speaking people who occupied the Great Lakes region from prehis-

toric times through the early 1800s. The Chippewa (Ojibwa), Ottawa (Odawa), and the Potawatomi all constituted a single tribe; they later split at Georgian Bay, Ontario, Canada and went their separate ways.

The Potawatomi people firmly believe that the Chippewa applied the term "Potawatomi" to them, meaning "people of the place of the fire," since they retained the original council fire once shared by all three tribes.

The information shared by Ron was very informative and highlighted that not all Native Americans look like the ones we often see on television.

Bent CD Receives Grant Funding from NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant Program

by Caroline Morlan
Las Animas FO

The Bent Conservation District recently received Conservation Innovation Grant funding from The Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service.

This is one of ten grants awarded to "develop and refine cutting-edge conservation technologies and approaches to help producers maintain viable agricultural operations," said Randy Randall, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations, Lakewood, CO.

Tom Wallace, Chair of the Bent Soil Conservation District states that this project, titled "Generating Farmstead Power," "will demonstrate the feasibility of utilizing wind energy on average-sized farms."

The project will select five to six farmsteads (demo sites) to install wind turbines. Demonstration sites will be monitored and the reduction of fossil fuel energy use will be tracked.

"This is an exciting project that will provide relevant data to producers that wish to explore the possibility of utilizing wind energy," states Cindy Schleining, District Conservationist, Las Animas Field Office.

The Bent Conservation District is accepting applications from farms and ranches to participate as a demonstration site.

For more information, please contact the Bent Conservation District at (719) 456-0120.



2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Census of Agriculture is a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches and the people who operate them.

Census forms will be mailed on **December 28, 2007**, to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2008.

For more information about the 2007 Census of Agriculture, please contact the National Agricultural Statistics Service Colorado Field Office at (800) 392-3202 or visit www.agcensus.usda.gov online.

A Major Chance: Local teen gets opportunity at hands-on learning

By Elaine White, Fowler Tribune

Reprinted with permission from the Fowler Tribune.

Summer often means camp for many kids. Band camp, 4-H camp, church camp, you name it, there's a camp for it.

This past summer local teen, Austin Major, attended Camp Rocky near Divide, Colorado, Camp Rocky, sponsored by the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado State Forest Service, and Colorado State University Cooperative (Coop) Extension, is a week long camp for teens who enjoy the outdoors and are interested in natural resources.

Resource professionals from around the state staff the camp and help participants learn about their environment while working in teams and meeting other students.

There are four resource fields from which students may choose to focus on during their week: forest management, rangeland science, soil and water conservation, and fish and wildlife management.

After choosing their fields of focus, students worked in teams to develop and present natural resource management plans. They also spent time exploring and discussing various controversial environmental issues.

Major's resource field of choice was rangeland science where campers learned about the "fitness" of the rangeland and the forage it provides. Their project for the week involved a rotational grazing project using llamas.

Students built a two-acre grazing area divided into six paddocks with a central area for watering. Four mature llamas were turned out daily to graze and were rotated through the paddocks.

This experiment allowed the

students to become acquainted with good grazing techniques while giving them some practical experience managing livestock.

During the week of Nov. 12th the Colorado Association of Soil Conservation Districts held their annual meeting in Colorado Springs and invited four of the campers, Ashley Vader, Jade Meinzer, Grant Slinger, and Austin Major, to speak about their experience at Camp Rocky.

The students presented their management plan and shared with the audience what they had observed during the rotational grazing study.

According to Ben Berlinger, NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist, the students concluded rotational grazing managed properly can lead to improved range conditions and is beneficial.

Major added, "This was a very good experiment and should be an activity used in other programs like Ag, FFA and 4-H."

He goes on to say, "Rotational grazing, managed wisely, is another way to help Colorado's environment, animals, and ecosystem and to help preserve the state's natural beauty."

Major encourages people to take projects like this seriously and sees it as a means to help our environment. Someday Major plans on implementing similar practices on his own ranch, possibly using bison or mustangs rather than llamas.

However, Major did point out that llamas, being from the camelidae family, are particularly easy on the land because their soft feet do less harm to the range and since they only need to water once through the day, usually in the evening, they don't trek to and from a water source like cattle.

In 2008, Camp Rocky will be held July 6th through 12th. Interested youth, ages 14 to 19, are encouraged to contact local NRCS or Coop Extension offices for more information or visit www.cacd.us.



Ben Berlinger, NRCS, introduces local youth at CACD annual meeting where they spoke about their Camp Rocky projects. Pictured are (left to right) Ashley Vader, Jade Meinzer, Grant Slinger, and Austin Major.

on the pulse

State Office News

Ila Binard, State Administrative Officer, hosted a district conservationist training recently. The training, called "The Effective District Conservationist," was conducted to provide DCs with effective tools to perform their duties and responsibilities.

The DCs were trained in topics such as identifying and using tools to track and manage workload, scheduling, delegation, time management, monitoring progress, and assessing accomplishments.

Similar meetings are scheduled to occur on a yearly basis.

Mike Wall, Resource Conservationist recently conducted a Mobile Office training/workshop. The session was aimed at increasing awareness as well as providing participants with hand opportunities to work with the equipment and generate products. Attendees shared tips

and successes as well as concerns regarding areas needing improvement.

On November 8th, **Joe Messina, Hydrologist,** provided two Adult CPR and AED (automated external defibrillator) training sessions to fifteen members of the State Office.

The course was about 4-5 hours long and taught participants how to act in an emergency when someone's breathing or circulation is impaired.

Participants also learned how to operate an AED, which is a device that

restores normal cardiac electrical activity to someone experiencing certain types of heart failure. An AED located in the State Office on the first floor on the wall where the security guard used to sit.



Campaign Success!

This year the NRCS State Office, raised **\$7,341** for the Combined Federal Campaign!

Thanks to all who supported this worthwhile cause.

A Job Well Done for State Office Employees!

These are only a few pictures of the many State Office employees who were awarded for their hard work, during a recent awards ceremony.



State Office News

Special Feature

NRCS State Conservationist Recognized for Distinguished Service

by Petra Barnes
State Public Affairs Specialist

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) honored Allen Green, Colorado's State Conservationist for the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), during its 63rd Annual Meeting.

Green was awarded the CACD 2007 Distinguished Service Award for outstanding lifetime commitment to conservation education and for conservation of natural resources in the state of Colorado.

"We couldn't think of a more deserving person to present this to," said Darlene Jensen, CACD Executive Vice-President. "He gives so much of his time and effort in support of Conservation Districts and the conservation of Colorado's natural resources. Selecting him was an easy choice."

Green has served as State Conservationist in Colorado for six years and one of his top priorities includes maintaining and strengthening conservation partnerships.

"NRCS has a mission of helping people help the land and has been charged with the responsibilities of providing assistance in the conservation of soil, water, air, plants, and animals. It is a daunting task and one that cannot be accomplished without strong partnerships and the support of private landowners," Green



Larry Hoozee, President of the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (left) presents Allen Green, NRCS State Conservationist, with the 2007 Distinguished Service Award at its recent 63rd Annual Meeting.

cited during a recent speech.

In addition to his time and energy in support of natural resource conservation, Green has also made supporting locally-led conservation efforts a top priority for the more than 300 NRCS employees within the state.

"NRCS employees around the state are just as committed as I am to natural resource conservation and have always been," states Green.

"When I came to Colorado some six years ago, what I found was that our employees and I held the same philosophy which was that the greatest impact, positive or negative, begins with what's happening and what isn't at the grassroots level."

Green's work benefits the entire state of Colorado. His efforts are vast, including his

assistance to local districts in the hiring of more than 25 conservation district technicians, as well as the establishment of numerous grants and agreement which allows for increased staff and funding to assist rural communities conserve natural resources.

"One of the most noteworthy and important efforts of Allen's is his support of Colorado's natural resources when faced with major disasters such as wildfires, severe drought conditions, and flooding," Jensen further states.

"One only has to read the paper to learn about NRCS's financial and technical support during our State's most dire times of need. He has authorized millions of dollars and countless hours of staff time to help restore private lands after devastation. It was an honor to present him with this award."

on the pulse

Area Office News

Area One

Duke Duzik, Colorado

First Conservation District Technician and **Paul Billig, Rangeland Management Specialist**, Craig Field Office, demonstrated how to control streambank erosion using the river trailer to Sunset Elementary students on their outdoor education field trip at Freeman Reservoir in Routt National Forest.



John Scott, District

Conservationist - Gunnison, assisted the Gunnison Conservation District at the Twelfth Annual Mill Creek Youth Summit for Seventh Graders in September.

This year there were five stations covering Timber,

Water Quality, Distance on the Landscape, Leave No Trace Camping, and Team Building.

Other partnering agencies included the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado State Forest Service, National Park Service, US Forest Service, and the School District.

There were about 90 students and teachers from Gunnison and Crested Butte involved this year in a beautiful fall outdoor experience.



John Scott, District

Conservationist - Gunnison, and **Lars Santana, Rangeland Management Specialist** - Montrose, assisted the Range School Training Cadre with a Field Tour that was a continuation of the

Range School held last fall.

There were 60 people in attendance including a High School Biology class from Paonia, Colorado.

The tour reinforced what the classroom session covered and allowed participants a chance to see those principles on the ground.

John helped with the discussion of Soils/Vegetation sites potentials, and Rangeland Health determinations. Both John and Lars helped with the demonstration and discussion of how to determine utilization.



Congratulations to

Lloyd Reed, Soil Conservationist, Grand Junction Area Office, on his selection as the new Area Earth Team Coordinator.

Area Two

The Yuma County

Conservation District and Wray Field Office employees participated in the Wray Daze, Yuma County Fair, and Vernon Days parades.

Their float, "The Wanderer," featured a steam locomotive, cattle car, and passenger car complete with bovine and steam locomotive sound effects.

Their float won the 'Sweepstakes' award at the Yuma County Fair, the highest honor given at the event.



Eileen Rademacher is the new Assistant Administrator for the Kiowa Conservation District in the Franktown field office.

Eileen started the position in October, and she is very excited to be in Franktown working with great people.

Eileen ended up in Colorado in 1976 after

moving cross country about every two years while she was growing up.

She moved to Elbert County in 1995 with her husband and two girls.

They reside in the Bijou Basin on 160 acres where her husband enjoys his cows, although he works full time in town. Her husband desires to be a full-time rancher in the near future.

The Rademachers love living in Elbert County with all that it has to offer and they are happy to be able to raise their family there.

The staff at the Franktown field office welcomes Eileen to the team and they are all benefiting from the resources and knowledge that she possesses.



Kiowa Conservation District held a three-hour Noxious Weed Seminar in September. Approximately 69 people were in attendance when Colorado State University (CSU) Professor Dr. George Beck spoke on Noxious Weed identification

and weed laws.

CSU Extension Director for Elbert County, Kipp Nye, spoke on Noxious Weed control measures.

Dan Nosal, Rangeland Management Specialist, Franktown Field Office (FO) spoke on noxious weed control using grazing animals and **Deric Clemons, District Conservationist,** Franktown FO, spoke on conservation programs.



The Franktown Field Office recently received training on portable fire extinguishers.

They learned valuable information including the two primary uses of portable fire extinguishers: to extinguish incipient fires (fires that have not spread beyond the area of origin), and to control fires where traditional methods of fire suppression are not recommended.

Debbie Rigo, Engineer; **Linda Pollick, Soil Conservation Technician;** **Deric Clemons, District Conservationist,** and Pam Brewster, District Manager, Douglas County and Kiowa

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area news cont.

Conservation Districts, all were trained on the basic steps of fire extinguisher operation.



Lana Pearson, District Conservationist, Simla, received The Trail Boss Award at the Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management (SRM) meeting on Wednesday, November 28.

The Trail Boss is the highest honor a member can receive from SRM in recognition of outstanding service to the range profession and the Society.

The Longmont

Conservation District with assistance from NRCS staff, local farmers, fertilizer dealers, and equipment representatives installed four strip-till plots during the week of November 4th.

This is an example of the old vo-ag adage of learning by doing. The goal of the project is to determine if strip tillage will work with sugar beets along the Colorado Front Range.

Local farmers are faced with rising fuel costs,

limited water, and limited labor.

We spent one day setting up the machines in a barley field. We tried several adjustments looking for the best combination for the desired seedbed.

We also used this time to set the loaned John Deere tractor's GPS guidance to a close tolerance as we were using six- and four-row equipment and the producer's plant with 12-row equipment.



We learned that we can create a clean seedbed that is about two inches above the adjacent ground. We also learned that speed is your friend in preparing a good seedbed.

We found that the bed became much finer once the speed was over 5.5 miles per hour. Lastly, we learned that soil moisture does make a difference.

Two years ago the ground was very wet and did not loosen and flow like we hoped. This year, the soil was around 60 to 70 percent of field moisture.

The furrows closed and the soil and crop residue worked much better.

We will be completing a second group of strip-till plots this spring around the week of April 6th. We have taken another step in the learning by doing with strip tillage and sugar beets.

Off Duty Coordination

Colorado's Resource Conservation and Development Coordinators (RC&D) spend an evening at Rich Mullaney's, Northeast Colorado RC&D Coordinator, taking donkey rides.



Okay – this is how you do it...



Psst – how would you like a job in Hugo?



How many coordinators does it take to...

Area Three

The Hugo Field Office

staff and the Prairie and High Plains Conservation Districts had a noxious weed display at the Lincoln County Fair. The display showed four major noxious weeds—Russian knapweed, Canada thistle, Leafy spurge, and Field bindweed—in the county.



Brian Johnson, District Conservationist, and **Al White, Soil Conservationist**, Hugo Field Office, helped the High Plains and Prairie Conservation Districts with their 6th-grade conservation day on September 26.

Charlie Pannebaker, Resource Conservationist, La Junta Area Office, and **Patty Moore, Biologist**, Pueblo Field Office, also helped. Fifty-seven school children from Limon, Hugo, and Karval schools participated.

The students went to seven stations pertaining to erosion, rangeland, wildlife,

soils, wetlands/playas, crops/tillage, and the river/riparian study center. The districts provided lunch to the students once everyone had rotated through all of the stations.



Congratulations to Al White, Soil Conservationist, Hugo Field Office, on his selection as the Area Earth Team Coordinator for Area 3.



The Springfield Field

Office assisted the Baca County Conservation District, the Southeast Colorado Resource Conservation and Development, and the Plainsman Research Center with a field day showcasing the latest information from a progressing sorghum derived ethanol study. The study is funded through a Conservation Innovation Grant.

Leon Kot, District Conservationist, Woodland Park Field Office, moderated a half panel/short tour of the Hayman fire rehab work for a group of Russian business leaders visiting the Woodland Park area.

The four visitors were picked by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to travel to the U.S. to learn how public/private volunteerism works in the U.S., specifically how the volunteer effort worked so well following the Hayman fire.

Area 3 hosted two of three range management schools in September.

The schools, held in Kim and Pueblo, were funded through a Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) grant to the Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management.

NRCSers who helped instruct at these two schools included **Tim Steffens, Rangeland Management Specialist**, Springfield Field Office, and **Ben Berlinger, Area Rangeland Management Specialist**, La Junta Area Office.

John Valentine, retired NRCS who now works for the Colorado State Land Board, also was an instructor.

The Fremont, Branson-Trinchera, and Baca County Conservation Districts also helped with the schools.



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area news cont.

Baca County

Conservation District and Southeast Colorado RC&D organized two meetings on July 19th for Southeast Colorado agriculture producers to learn more about Rocky Mountain Farmers Union's Carbon Credit Program.

Sister Conservation Districts Branson-Trinchera and Northeast Prowers helped host the events.

The Springfield morning meeting was held at the Longhorn Steakhouse and concluded with a fine brisket lunch.

The Lamar event was held in the afternoon at the Colorado Room in the Cow Palace Inn.

Both meetings were very well attended, with 43 in Springfield and 23 in Lamar.

The possibility of receiving additional income for sequestering carbon has generated a lot of interest among area farmers and ranchers.

Producers can potentially get paid for conservation practices they are already doing that capture and store



carbon in the soil.

Tony Frank from Rocky Mountain Farmers Union detailed the five categories producers can enroll in: conservation tillage, long term grass seeding, rangeland management, forestry, and methane offset.

Ag producers asked great questions at both meetings. The information exchange and dialog that followed helped everyone understand the benefits and risks involved.

Detailed information can be found at www.nfu.org.

Thank you to the event sponsors: Baca County, Branson-Trinchera, and Northeast Prowers Conservation Districts; Southeast Colorado RC&D; Orebaugh Insurance; Hoffman Insurance; and Rocky Mountain Farmers Union.

On September 19, 2007, Under Secretary of Agriculture Mark Rey approved the realignment request of Sangre de Cristo Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council to expand its boundaries to include Park and Teller Counties in its designated RC&D Area.

The realignment comes about due to the counties having very similar needs related to natural resources,

economics, and agriculture.

Jane Wustrow, RC&D Coordinator, states, *"This realignment will allow for a more regional approach to solving shared problems and addressing opportunities including conservation of natural resources and the enhancement of economic development."*

The Lamar Field Office

and Prowers Conservation District hosted a tree pruning workshop on October 2, 2007 at the Lamar Colorado Division of Wildlife office.

Shelly Van Landingham, LaJunta State Forest Service, gave a presentation and then participants were encouraged to prune tree branches and get some hands-on experience.

Thirty people attended and local tree vendors were on hand including Seuffer Tree Farm, Guihens, Vanhooks and Hardwood.



The Sangre de Cristo RC&D Council completed the construction of a second river and riparian study center (river trailer) with technical assistance from NRCS and funding from the Bureau of Reclamation.

Area Four

The Center Field Office,

Center Conservation District, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and other state and local government bodies have joined forces with the landowners on Kerber Creek to restore the water quality of the creek.

Mine activities of the past have made the creek inhabitable by most species. We have participated in landowner and stakeholder meetings and have participated in work groups of landowners to accomplish two simple goals.

We will assist in reclamation of 16 mill tailing sites and streambank stabilization along the 17 mile of Kerber Creek.

We hope that with the assistance to the private landowners and the work already done on the public lands will bring the water quality standards to support aquatic life in the stream.



Since real estate in La Plata County is a booming business **Dan Lynn, District Conservationist**, Durango, gave a presentation to local realtors.

This one-day workshop was put together to provide general information to the realtors about NRCS functions and service availability.

Also covered in the workshop: general soils information and where to find it, and calculating AUMs for dryland, irrigated pastures, and rangeland.

He also explained water rights and the amount of water needed to successfully irrigate acreage depending on soils, slopes, etc.

The realtor is typically the first person from whom a potential new landowner gets information. Now, 78 realtors in La Plata County can provide additional natural resources information to new landowners.



James P. Pannell celebrated his 81st birthday September 4, 2007.

He is a Soil Scientist in the Durango Field Office. He

has completed 58 years of federal service.

He is very capable and proficient doing soils descriptions, manuscripts and assisting developers, mining operators, college students, etc. with soil analysis and management. His birthday cake read "29 years old, one more time!"

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JP!

The MLRA Soil Survey

Office in Alamosa posted the digital soils layer for Costilla County on the web. This data can now be accessed by field offices and the public to obtain important soils information. The manuscript for this survey is currently being developed and expected to be completed in 2008. To view the spatial layer, go to www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov and navigate to Costilla County, Colorado.



Monte Vista Boy Scout

Troop 287 member Steven Bowman demonstrated leadership when he planned and coordinated several Earth Team volunteer days to remove over a mile of damaged internal fencing on a

cont. on page 15

area news cont.

newly acquired Wetlands Reserve Program conservation easement in Conejos County.

The damaged fencing had been determined an entanglement hazard to elk and other wildlife. In addition to generating over 156 volunteer hours and soliciting the donation of all equipment needed to complete the project, Steven also ensured that the scrap metal was recycled, and the wood posts were charitably donated as firewood.

Steven stated, "I believe that this project has given all of us a greater appreciation for wildlife and an awareness of how easily our actions can impact our surrounding natural resources."

Our appreciation goes out to Steven and Monte Vista Boy Scout Troop 287 for all their hard work.



San Luis Field Office

has collaborated with DARCA (Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance) a non-profit organization, in promoting their efforts to serving the needs of ditch companies.

DARCA provides the following services: research and advocacy to support the operation and management of ditches and reservoirs;

educational programs including training workshops and handbook publications for board members, shareholders, engineers, attorneys, company secretaries, superintendents, and ditch riders.

They also offer an online reference library with current information on court cases, sample legal agreements, cross-company comparison data, changes in law, and management tips, along with access to a network of ditch companies all across the state.

San Luis Office personnel have met with local acequia promoters and the Executive Director of DARCA to discuss our acequia program and a proposal to host DARCA's convention and one of their workshops in our area.

NRCS has been able to help with technical information (maps) and contact referrals regarding the organization of the event.

The workshop will be held in Fort Garland and the annual convention in San Luis in February 2008. Further information can be obtained at: www.darca.org.

September 26th and 27th were days of celebration and reflection on the cleanup of abandoned mines in the Upper Animas River Watershed.

The Animas River

Stakeholders Group (ARSG), in partnership with the San Juan Resource Conservation and Development Council, has been improving the quality of the Animas River in San Juan County with benefits extending for many miles down stream.



The ARSG formed in the mid 90s as a volunteer collaborative effort to address the serious problem of heavy metal contamination from abandoned mines in the upper Animas River watershed.

Through hard work and open discussions, they began to tackle this huge problem by evaluating and inventorying the approximately 1,500 mines and waste sites in the area.

After evaluation and testing, 67 priority sites were found to be producing over 90 percent of the heavy metal contaminants that find their way into the Animas River system.

Various partners contribute much-needed financial resources to enable successful reclamation of the former mining sites in the watershed.

Getting the word out on fire



Jefferson CD prepares handbook to help districts to address wildfire

reprinted from NACD Forestry Notes

Jefferson Conservation District (CD) in Lakewood, Colo. recently released a handbook entitled, "The Phoenix Guide: A handbook for watershed and community wildland-fire recovery." The booklet is a product of information gathered from a number of western districts which have dealt with wildfire up close.

"We thought it would be great to gather the information together so that others could learn from our mistakes and successes," said Karen Berry, an official on the Conservation District's Board.

Jefferson CD realized there was a need for the resource some time ago, after it had already assisted on several fires.

According to Berry, "At the start of one fire season, districts contacted us to gain knowledge." The District organized a series of meetings, but then the Hayman Fire of 2002 arrived, demanding all of its attention.

That fire consumed 133 homes in an area 30 miles southwest of Denver. The devastation created by that fire, coupled with an even greater need for fire information from area respondents, led Jefferson CD to develop the full-color handbook.

The district used a \$7,000 U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry grant, via a subcontract with NACD, to fund the project, which began as a much smaller booklet that grew into a 126-page undertaking.

"Once we started talking to other organizations and conservation districts we realized there were

so many aspects. It just naturally expanded," said Berry. "There are so many people doing good work out there."

The handbook is helpful to communities trying to recover from catastrophic wildfires, but Berry emphasized that it is of most help to those looking to prepare before a disaster sweeps through their community.

Said Berry, "One of the things we've tried to do in the manual is to help others get up emergency response methods ahead of time. It's not for post-fire, it's meant to help things go more smoothly ahead of the fire."

The handbook is broken into nine chapters. They include:

- What's in the handbook
- Impact of wildfire
- On the brink of disaster: What you can do to be ready
- Community engagement
- The recovery process: Immediately after the fire
- Toward the recovery: Organizing and utilizing volunteers
- Restore landscapes and rebuild communities
- Liability: Volunteer protection and Good Samaritan laws
- Grants: Funding recovery efforts

To add perspective, Berry sought opinions from districts in California, New Mexico, South Dakota and Montana which had helped communities rebuild after

experiencing catastrophic wildfire.

That collaboration, along with a working relationship with USFS Urban and Community Forestry and the Coalition for the Upper South Platte has created one of the most comprehensive handbooks available to districts with regard to wildfire.

"I know the Jefferson District well, and I couldn't be more pleased that it was the one to take on this project," said Larry Payne, director of cooperative forestry for the U.S. Forest Service.

"It's always a thrill for me when districts work with other districts on anything to do with addressing wildfire. This handbook is going to be incredibly useful and I'd like to see it get into the hands of as many district folks as possible. I think it's that valuable."

Catastrophic wildfire continues



to be a problem, not only in western states but across the country. As Payne said, "The job we're facing is getting bigger and more complex

each year." For this reason, Berry considers the handbook a constant work in progress.

For more information on Jefferson County Soil Conservation District, visit the Web site at <http://www.jeffersonscd.org>, or contact Karen Berry at 303.866.2018, or email her at kahberry@mac.com.

Bent Conservation District named CSCB District of the Year

by Nancy Appel

Bent Conservation District Manager

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts held their 63rd Annual Meeting November 12-15 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Over 200 individuals attended the meeting.

Agencies attending included Colorado Association of Conservation Districts, the 77 Colorado Conservation Districts statewide, the Colorado State Conservation Board, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado Department of Agriculture, and Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment.

The hard work and accomplishments of conservationists throughout the state were recognized in the Annual Meeting Award Ceremony.

The Bent Conservation District was selected by the Colorado State Conservation Board as the Conservation District of the Year.

Accepting the award on behalf of the Bent Conservation District were Tom Wallace, Board President; James Souders, Supervisor; Carlos Earl, Conservation Technician; and Nancy Appel, District Manager.

The Bent Conservation District participated in numerous projects during 2006 which meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water, and related resources.

District activities resulted in improved riparian/upland habitat and increased plant diversity, reduced salinity impact on water due to tamarisk along the Arkansas River, and treatment of tamarisk infestation on private lands.

The District was able to assist producers with the planning of windbreak/shelterbelt establishment and



Left to right: Nancy Appel, BCD District Manager; Carlos Earl, BCD Conservation Tech; Tom Wallace, President BCD Board; James Souders, BCD Board Supervisor; and Danny Nuehold, President, Colorado State Conservation Board.

provide a tree planter and weed barrier installation machine through the district rental program.

Drip irrigation, rabbit guards, and weed barrier fabric are also sold by the district to help facilitate the installation of windbreaks.

Rain gauges and assistance in monitoring rangeland conditions were provided to help with drought recovery.

Bird ladders for livestock watering facilities were made available to producers to encourage protection of short grass prairie birds.

Technical assistance was provided to help producers install underground pipeline, gated pipe, regulating reservoirs, and sprinklers.

Planning and design assistance was given to producers to facilitate proper grazing. A Truax Flex drill is available for rent to assist producers with grass seed/seeding and pas-

ture hay planting conservation practices.

The district also promoted practical experience in determining land classification and capability by coordinating the district FFA Land Classification Contests.

The completion of the District activities throughout the year are made possible through many outstanding relationships with partners that provide financial assistance, in-kind donations, and technical assistance.

The District strives to maintain our partnerships and looks forward to building on our alliance as we continue to address the conservation of our soil, water, plant communities, and wildlife.

For information on services provided by the Bent Conservation District, please contact the District office located at 760 Bent Ave., Las Animas, CO, or at 719-456-0120.



Young Upstate New Yorker Enjoys Summer Volunteering for Colorado NRCS

by Mary Miller, Area Public Affairs Specialist

"I've had a very fun summer," said Phillip Bolen, La Junta, Colo., USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Earth Team volunteer.

After doing well in the SAT tests a year ago, Bolen received a letter from the Colorado School of Mines inviting him to visit the campus during his 2007 spring break.

Bolen and his Dad, who lives in La Junta, were telling Mike Taylor, Area Engineer in La Junta, about their campus visit at a school band concert back in La Junta.

Taylor mentioned that he could use a student volunteer to help with survey work during the summer, so Bolen signed up thinking of the experience he would get.

Most of his approximately 100 hours of volunteer time was spent assisting Taylor with survey

work in the field. "We covered a lot of ground between the two of us," said Taylor. "It makes it tremendously more efficient when there are two of us surveying."

Bolen, who hopes to participate in the NRCS Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) program next summer, also did some drafting and had training on how to run a survey circuit with turns and cross sections.

"Having helped with the survey work this summer will help me when I take a principles of engineering class this coming school year," said Bolen, who is now a junior at Oswego High School in upstate New York.

He has already taken a designing and drafting on the computer class.

Bolen's goal is to become a civil engineer. He likes the diversity of NRCS engineer work but

has always liked the idea of designing bridges.

Because he feels the School of Mines is the premiere civil engineering school, Bolen's goal is to attend the Colorado school once he graduates.



Phillip Bolen, left, Earth Team Volunteer, assists Mike Taylor, Area Engineer, La Junta, with survey work in the field.

Congratulations, Colorado Earth Team!

In fiscal year 2007, there were **784** volunteers who provided more than **25,437** hours in the state. In addition, NRCS offices had **100** percent participation of Earth Team Volunteers.

Landcare to reprint "Join the Earth Team" poster



The NRCS ET volunteer coordinators identified a need to reprint the NRCS Earth Team poster "Join the Earth Team" to help State and local ET coordinators stimulate interest in the NRCS volunteer program.

The new poster, PA-1956, "Join the Earth Team," was developed to fulfill this need.

Posters will be available soon and may be ordered from 1-888-LANDCARE.

FY 2006 Colorado NRCS Earth Team Award Winners!



CACD/NRCS

Bookcliff, Mount Sopris and Southside Conservation Districts

RC&D/NRCS

San Luis Valley RC&D, Alamosa, CO

Group

Haxtun Conservation District Conservation Camp, Holyoke Field Office

Individual

Frank Kenny, Colorado Big Country RC&D

NRCS Employee

Kristi Gay, District Conservationist, Flagler Field Office

Chief's Field Award

Akron Field Office

Volunteer Coordinator

Sandra Geer, Grand Junction Area Office



Techno Tips

Ink Annotations: Using Tablet PC To Sign A Document

by Jeff Koster, East Central Colorado RC&D Coordinator, Hugo Field Office

You're working with a producer on a management plan and you need to get a signature on this management job sheet before they leave on vacation.

The technical specialist that reviews your job sheets is in another office 60 miles away. What can you do? Well, with the technology we currently have in our offices, quite a lot can be done. Using email and the NRCS network, the document can be sent, signed and printed all in a matter of minutes instead of several days or weeks through mail.

If you are using a mobile office, you can log into the NRCS network using an internet connection and a virtual private network account. Once you are "in" you can bring up a document in MS Word or MS Excel that you need signed and complete it as you would normally.

Using the Tablet PC's pen stylus you can sign Word and Excel documents. When you would normally print the document for a signature, save all your changes to a file (this is only necessary if you wish to keep a completed copy of the file). Go to the program tool bar and under the insert menu is the command "Ink Annotations."

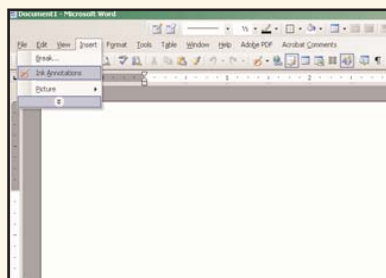
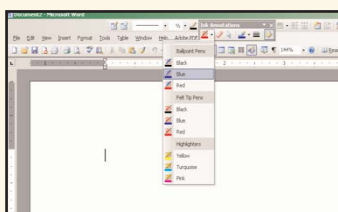


Figure 1: Left click on this command and it will display the ink annotations tool bar. The far left button will display a "pen" with a red line under it.

To the right of this button is a small black triangle indicating a drop down menu. Click on this triangle and the drop down menu will give you a choice of pen styles; ballpoint or felt tip and colors: red, blue or black.

Figure 2: The drop down menu will give you a choice of pen styles; ballpoint or felt tip and colors: red, blue or black.



The system defaults to a red felt tip. You can also use the stylus as a highlighter with the colors of yellow, turquoise, or pink.

Select the color of your choice with the stylus and use it as a pen to sign the document on the tablet's screen, just as if you are signing a paper document.

If you mess up the signature, you can redo it by clicking the undo command on the toolbar or you can click the eraser on the ink annotations toolbar and then erase the signature with the stylus.

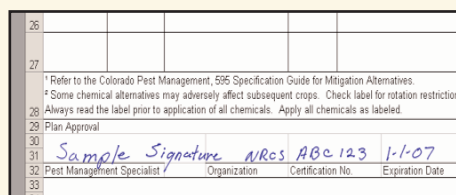


Figure 3: Sample signature.

Once the document is signed, all you need to do is print it. Select the printer you wish to use and click print.

Verify that the document prints correctly and then delete the signature by using the undo or erase commands or by exiting the document without saving your changes. You already have a copy of the document without a signature because you saved it before it was signed.

You need to delete the signature to prevent changes to the signed document and/or to prevent unauthorized use of the signature.

You can print the document to any printer of your choice on the network in your field office, a different field office, the area office, or the State Office.

All you need to know is the name of the printer that you wish to send your document. If you use an ink color other than black and print the document on a color printer, the finished print job will look as if it had been printed and then signed.

Unfortunately, this method currently does not work with PDF files. The Excel worksheet permissions may need to be adjusted in the document properties to accept changes in order for you to sign them in Excel.

LOOKS CAN KILL!**Diffuse Knapweed**
(*Centaurea diffusa*)**- Control Methods -**

It is imperative to prevent seed production as a mature plant can produce over 20,000 seeds per plant.

This weed responds well to herbicides but even better to mechanical methods.

Severing the taproot below the soil surface or continual mowing will successfully control the plant.

Mechanical

Dig or pull anytime you see it year round.

Cultural

Sensitive areas, 2 lbs. 2,4-D per acre spring and fall.

Non-sensitive areas, 1 pt.

Tordon per acre or ½ pt.

Tordon plus ½ pt. Banvel per acre spring and fall.

Chemical

Keep native vegetation in good condition by not overgrazing and by practicing good range management techniques.

CARL Class III visits Southeast Colorado

By James Wittler, Soil Conservationist
Springfield Field Office

Colorado Agriculture and Rural Leadership (CARL) class III began the summer with a trip to Southeast Colorado on May 13, 2007.

The purpose of the trip was to explore the crossroads of agriculture and energy, study about the community college system in Colorado, learn about rural economic development, and understand the issues surrounding Pinon Canyon.

Monday, May 14 began with an energy discussion that focused on the role of energy and its impact and relevance to agriculture.

The purpose of the session was to understand the impacts of renewable energy on rural communities and the challenges faced by rural areas hoping to attract renewable energy investment.

Other topics of discussion included the challenges faced by local farm groups who strive to invest in these industries themselves, and finally the perspective of local utilities who must meet growing energy demands and buy and/or transmit power generated from renewable energies.

John Stulp, Colorado Agriculture Commissioner, gave a presentation that highlighted the dividends that the 'new' energy economy would bring to agriculture.

Much of the Commissioner's presentation focused on the impacts that the Colorado Green wind project had on Prowers County and the local economy.

Following Commissioner Stulp, Troy Crane, Baca County Commissioner, discussed the

efforts of Baca County to recruit wind companies to construct projects there.

His presentation brought to the forefront the challenges of transmission: building and financing new lines, interconnection costs, easements, etc.

Jim Spiers, Senior Manager, Planning/Rates/Member Services for Tri-State Generation and Transmission, gave a comprehensive overview of the electricity industry.

This overview included a discussion of the challenges posed by integrating intermittent sources like wind with coal and the growing customer demand for energy.

The final presentation was given by Chris Rundell from Prairie Wind, a farmer-owned wind development group.

Rundell gave CARL participants an inside look into a real-life case study of the risks faced by farmers and community groups who strive to build their own commercial sources of energy generation.

The CARL class complemented the mornings Energy Forum with a tour of the Colorado Green Energy project, a wind farm owned jointly by General Electric Wind Energy and the Scottish energy company, PPM.

The 108 turbine wind farm, built in 2002, supplies energy for approximately 45,000 households.

The presentations and the tour of the wind farm gave participants an exposure to the host of issues that encompass the intersection of energy and agriculture.

Kiowa CD hosts conservation tour

By Katherine Burse-Johnson, Public Affairs Specialist

The Kiowa Conservation District hosted a conservation tour that allowed a group of individuals the opportunity to look at conservation practices that have been implemented in the Kiowa, Elbert, and Elizabeth areas.

The group visited four different properties during the three-hour tour to see conservation practices such as an irrigation pipeline, grass seeding, a stock tank, sprinkler/pivots, and cross fencing used for proper grazing management.

"The purpose of this tour is to give landowners and other interested parties a hands-on view of conservation practices that the District has been involved with over the years," said Charlie Carnahan, President, Kiowa Conservation District.

The tour kicked off with a visit to Carnahan's 3,000-acre ranch, of which 185 acres is currently under irrigation through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Carnahan's ranch is the oldest ranch in Elbert County, dating back to 1860, and has spanned through four generations.

The ranch initially had some contour work done on it and then, at a later time, terraces were put in along with dams to help with erosion control.

This year, Carnahan got involved under the EQIP for assistance in the reseeded of alfalfa and grass. He installed a 1,500-foot pipeline and currently runs pivot and sideroll systems to help irrigate his land.



Gerald Sjaastad, landowner on left, speaks to the group about the practices he has implemented on his land.

The next stop for the group included a look at Gerald



Charlie Carnahan, President, Kiowa Conservation District, and landowner, uses pivot systems to irrigate portions of his land.

"The purpose of this tour is to give landowners and other interested parties a hands-on view of conservation practices the District has been involved with over the years."

—Charlie Carnahan, President, Kiowa CD

Sjaastad's ranch. Sjaastad currently has six contracts with NRCS: four under EQIP, one under the Wetlands Reserve Program, and one under the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

In 1991, Sjaastad installed side rolls but found that it was not providing the water efficiency that he needed. Then he discovered the center pivot through working with NRCS and liked it so much that he purchased one.

"I was so enthused that I can have effective water management use on my land," Sjaastad said. "Now, I get 5 1/4 tons-per-acre production using the pivot system where I only got 3 tons-per-acre in the past using the side roll system."



The group observes a solar-generated stock tank on landowner Phil Brown's property.

Down the road, landowner Phil Brown showed the group his 460-acre ranch.

Brown is under an EQIP contract, which afforded him the opportunity to install cross fencing and three stock tanks with solar pumps to improve grazing.

"I am in the process of installing solar pumps and plan to have that project completed soon," Brown said.

The group's last stop included a look at landowner Rowan Tyson's work with cross fencing on his land that was implemented under an NRCS EQIP contract.

The group finished off the tour by enjoying a lunch that was sponsored by the District.

About the Kiowa Conservation District...

The Kiowa Conservation District is a non-taxing, non-profit special district dedicated to the success of agricultural pursuits through the conservation of natural resources. The district is governed by a Board of seven Supervisors who are volunteers. The Kiowa CD was established on October 13, 1966.

www.kiowacd.org



New Era for Soil Survey

by Petra Barnes, Public Affairs Specialist

As the initial survey of U.S. soil conditions and resources nears completion, the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) program is shifting its resources to updating and enhancing existing soil resource information.

This new era will focus on improving the consistency of soils information on a Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) basis, ignoring political boundaries, and promoting and providing technical assistance and education to our customers and land use decision makers. Leading this new effort are the newly created Major Land Resource Area Soil Survey Offices (MLRA SSOs).

While Colorado will eventually host five, three are already up and open for business.

The three operating MLRA SSOs in Colorado are located in Alamosa, Ft. Morgan, and Pueblo.

The remaining two will be located in Ft. Collins and Grand Junction. In addition to the five Colorado locations, MLRA SSOs in Rock Springs, Wyoming; Price, Utah; Scotts Bluff, Nebraska; Garden City, Kansas; and Grants, New Mexico will provide service to smaller corners of Colorado.

"Selecting the locations of the MLRA soil survey offices around the country was arduous," says Steve Park, NRCS State Soil Scientist/MLRA Region 6 Team Leader, Lakewood, CO.

"Careful consideration was taken at the state and national lev-

els to determine the best placement of the MLRA Soil Survey Offices. Negotiations were long and difficult and involved many different partners."

"The establishment of these offices is vital to achieving the mission of the soil survey program set forth by the Agricultural Appropriation Act of 1896," Park further states.

Over the years, soil surveys had been conducted mostly on a county basis which has resulted in a quilt-work pattern of soils information proving to be inconsistent on political boundaries.

These newly developed MLRA Soil Survey Offices will ignore political boundaries, resulting in a seamless, more consistent inventory of soils coverage.

These offices will also provide the opportunity to enhance existing soils data collected during the initial phases of the soil program.

"The program began well over 100 years ago with the first soil survey ever conducted. Our knowledge and technology has changed over the years as well as

the conditions of the soils first inventoried," Park states.

"These offices offer tremendous opportunity for our partners and land use decisions makers.

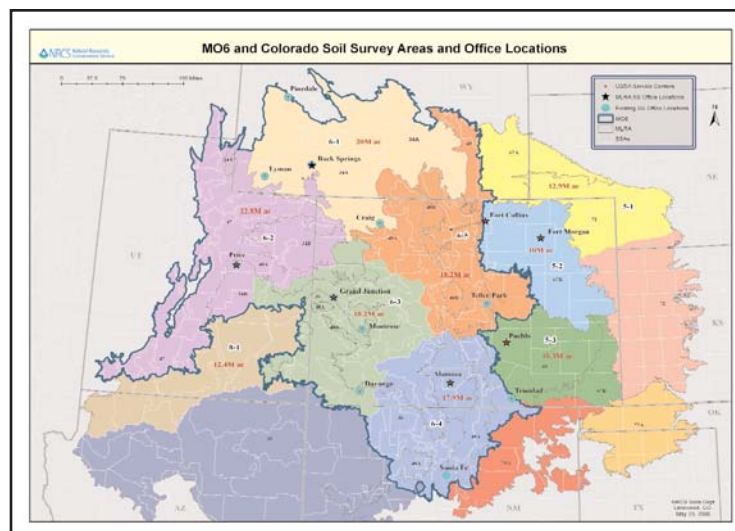
"In addition to improved and more consistent soils information and products, these offices will allow us to go back and do some of the things we are doing now but were not able to do at the beginning of the soil survey program: things like gathering new and different data to enhance the science of soils, and sampling and long-term monitoring of dynamic soil properties, including carbon sequestration and many other properties."

The soil survey staff will also provide technical services, assist with the natural resources inventory and assessment projects, and provide training and overall support to users of soil survey information.

USDA's National Cooperative Soil Survey Program is a cooperative effort led by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through other Federal and state agencies and numerous other entities which make up the NCSS partners.

The Ft. Collins and Grand Junction MLRA Soil Survey Offices will be up and running in the spring of 2008, and all NRCS MLRA soil survey offices are scheduled to be functional by the end of 2009.

"I am really excited about these offices," affirms Park.



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Super Ditch examined by farmers

Reprinted with permission from The Pueblo Chieftain

by CHRIS WOODKA

THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

A proposed Super Ditch in the Lower Arkansas Valley could supply water to growing areas in the state while allowing farmers to retain water rights ownership.

In any case, it still would be required to meet state water law requirements and allow the state to fulfill its obligations to Kansas under the Arkansas River Compact.

A daylong meeting Tuesday at Otero Junior College explored the details of a Super Ditch - a land following, water leasing program that would allow farmers to control their water rights - being promoted by the Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District.

The workshop attracted 115 people, mostly ditch shareholders or officers.

Besides sharing the latest legal and engineering studies by the Lower Ark, the workshop invited experts on state water law as well as some potential customers to talk about the potential consequences of the Super Ditch.

None of the seven potential ditch companies envisioned as participants - Bessemer, Catlin, Fort Lyon, High Line, Holbrook, Otero and Oxford canals - have yet met or voted on the proposal. The Lower Ark has funneled more than \$500,000 into studies so far, but eventually plans to have shareholders own and run the Super Ditch.

The change of the traditional use of water rights to municipal

uses from agriculture envisioned under the Super Ditch also would require an application in Division 2 water court - in what several people already have termed "the mother of all court cases."

Still, it's a cause worth pursuing, one of the state's most respected water lawyers said.

"The cities have the people and the votes," said water attorney David Robbins, whose clients range from Colorado Springs to the Rio Grande Water Conservancy District. "I hope you continue to work with the Lower Ark to find a way that lets you take control, yet keep control of your resources."

Robbins said any water leasing program such as the Super Ditch would have, as its primary obligation, to maintain the level of water use to fulfill Arkansas River Compact obligations.

He explained how changing the use of a water right could not increase the amount of water the right has historically yielded.

"The measure of a water right is the amount beneficially consumed, not the amount diverted," Robbins explained.

Robbins, whose firm also is handling Kansas v. Colorado Supreme Court litigation, was emphatic about meeting the needs of the compact, at times passionate.

He joined Division 2 Water Engineer Steve Witte in defending

the need for proposed water efficiency rules, a favorite topic for many of the farmers in attendance Tuesday.

"There's not an endless supply of water," Robbins said. "If you want to improve irrigation on some of your farm, you're not going to be able to irrigate every acre."

We are consuming more water than Mother Nature gave us, and we still have to meet our obligations to our neighbors."

Farmers were not convinced. They argued that efficiency programs have been promoted by the federal government, and took issue with Witte's theory that irrigation improvements could reduce return flows.

"If one farmer on a ditch puts in a sprinkler system, how are you going to regulate the whole ditch?" asked Dan Henrichs, High Line Superintendent.

"During the drought, I think there were a lot of farms that returned no flows to the river. Is that because of increased consumption?" asked Dale Mauch, former Fort Lyon Canal president.

"I didn't hear a whole lot this morning that made me happy," said Fort Lyon President Herb Reyher during the lunch break.

Witte, while talking about the Super Ditch, spent much of his time defending the efficiency rules, which would require farmers who have made physical improvements

continued on next page

Super Ditch, cont'd from page 23

to irrigation systems since 1999 to either show they have not reduced return flows or stop using the improvements.

He said every change of use has the potential to cut return flows for downstream users.

"It depends on the practices," Witte said, in response to a question about whether improvements affect return flows.

He said each application would be looked at on a case-by-case basis. "It's difficult for me to imagine all of the types of improvements and practices."

The Super Ditch also would require acreage to be dried up and farmers would not be able to pick and choose which ground to put in the program without giving up some legitimate cropland, Witte said, saying credits on a High Line Canal lease in 2004-05 were adjusted according to the actual dry-ups.

"Folks, you can't make a change without effecting a change. There has to be a dry-up to liberate water for additional uses," Witte said.

Witte also outlined state substitute water supply laws that would allow the Super Ditch to operate until a water court decision is made.

The group also heard from two potential customers of the Super Ditch, although any deals are still a long way off.

Gary Barber, of the Pikes Peak Regional Water Authority, said the group of El Paso County communities is dependent on Denver Basin Aquifers for its supply and wants to cooperate with the Super Ditch once it is formed.

The group has launched a study that includes a reservoir at Stonewall Springs near the Pueblo Chemical Depot and a pipeline north.

"We continue to mine groundwater," Barber said. "Working with the Super Ditch requires a lot of infrastructure, and that's a challenge for us."

Mark Harding, president of Pure Cycle - both a water provider in the Denver Metro area and the largest shareholder on the Fort Lyon Canal - said Front Range communities no longer can come into agricultural communities and scoop up water rights as they have in the past. He said collaboration is the only answer.

"If you can't find a solution that protects all the interests in the basin, it's going to get harder and harder to find a water supply," Harding said.

New Era for Soil Survey,

continued from page 22

"I think they will be the best jobs in the agency. Their duties will be multi-faceted with high job satisfaction, a switch from the grinding duties of conducting initial soil surveys day-after-day, year-after-year."

"The initial soil survey product for this country is the best in the world, but it is not without its problems. With this new structure, political boundaries will be ignored, resulting in seamless and consistent soils coverage," Park continues.

"We will be taking a great product now and making it even better, ensuring that one of our most precious natural resources is protected for future generations."



Governor's Forum on Colorado Agriculture

"Advancing Colorado's Rural Development"

February 28, 2008

DoubleTree Hotel
3203 Quebec, St., Denver, Colorado

This 17th Annual Event will be led by
State and National Experts.

Discussions include:

Economics ♦ Water Issues ♦ Energy
Marketing ♦ Transportation ♦ Technology
Plus much more!

For more information visit
www.colorado.gov/ag

Business Cartoon Features



From Sorghum to Ethanol

Plainsman Research Center, Baca County Conservation District, and Southeast Colorado Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) joined forces to host a Fall Crops Field Day in September.

Kevin Larson, Superintendent of the Research Farm, gave the 33 attendees a dynamic presentation on the processes utilized to produce ethanol from sorghums. His research is for a Conservation Innovation Grant on the ethanol properties of grain and forage sorghums.

Kevin demonstrated how he extracts the cane juice from forage sorghum with a hand press he ordered from Brazil. Kevin also showed off the Research Center's new equipment--a shiny, silver still used to distill mash into ethanol.

Kevin escorted the crowd through the Research Farm's sorghum varieties, detailing the benefits and challenges with each type.

Next on the tour was the skip row corn. The Research Center is conducting field trials for yield comparisons between skip row corn and conventionally planted corn. Attendees also looked at the cotton Plainsman is growing.

The group finished up the day with sub sandwiches from Piccadilly's. Thank you to Southeast Colorado RC&D for providing lunch and Baca County Conservation District for organizing the event.



Mobile Office offers more efficient means to conservation planning

A New Way of Helping People Help the Land

Purpose of the Mobile Office

- ✓ Increase accuracy and speed of product delivery
- ✓ Increase time with customers
- ✓ Improve efficiency of personnel time in field

Benefits of the Mobile Office

- ✓ Certify and approve installed practices instantly to speed payments
- ✓ Improve communications between NRCS and its customers
- ✓ Instant access to and query of data in the field
- ✓ Accurate, on-site evaluation of conservation alternatives

Products Produced Directly from the Mobile Office

- ✓ Jobsheets (seeding recommendations, nutrient management)
- ✓ Forms (application, certification)
- ✓ Maps (plan, inventory, installed)
- ✓ Fact Sheets (weed control, program)
- ✓ Standards and Specifications (web material)
- ✓ Engineering Documents (survey, locations, elevations)

Example of How the Mobile Office Has Been Used

"Joe Farmer wanted to install an irrigation system and use the natural fall between the ditch and his field to get the pressure.

To accomplish this in one trip, the site was surveyed using GPS equipment. We then downloaded information to the tablet computer to get location of all the points taken on a map in ArcGIS, used ArcGIS to size a pivot and find a pivot point.

We then determined how much flow would be necessary to feed the system and found pipe lengths and friction losses to size the pipe accordingly, delivered standard drawing of box inlet and set locations, gave producer standards and specifications on pipe.

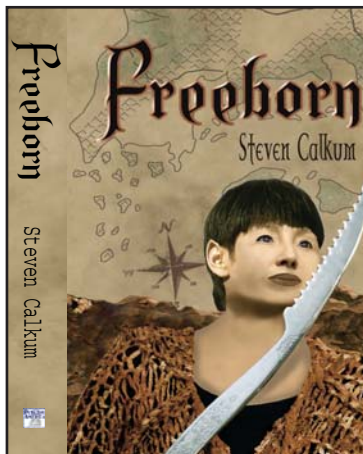
As a result of the information done through the Mobile Office, NRCS was able to sign Joe Farmer onto the Environmental Quality Incentives Program."

-- Steve Jaouen, Range Management Specialist, NRCS, Glenwood Springs, CO



NRCS Employee Spot Light

more than meets the eye



Steve Calkum releases his first fantasy novel

Eventually, *Freeborn* comes to terms with his mixed heritage and begins to find his own identity and purpose in life as he grows from boyhood to manhood and explores his expansive world.

The book, which consists of 53 chapters and 505 pages, is a work that Calkum began in 1997 when he went through a period of unemployment.

Calkum's passion for writing dates back to when he wrote *Dungeons and Dragons* adventures during his undergraduate studies at Colorado State University.

Over the years, Calkum has been heavily influenced by notable authors such as Louis L'Amour, Tom Clancey, R.A. Salvatore, and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Currently, Calkum is working on the sequel to *Freeborn*, called *The Hunter*, and he hopes to have it completed in the next twelve months.

In his spare time, Calkum

enjoys reading, movies, and role-playing games, but he admits that most of his outside-of-work diversions have taken backseat to his writing.

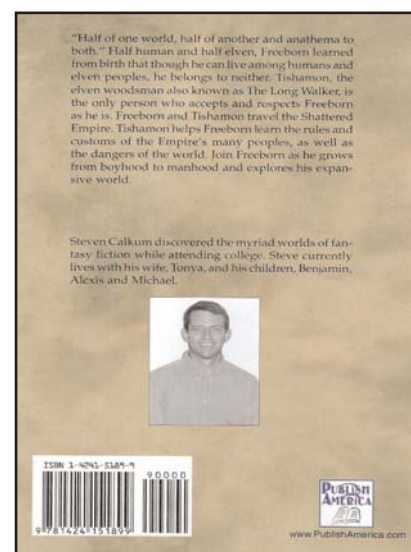
Calkum and his wife Tonya have three children: Benjamin, Alexis, and Michael.

Calkum's book is available through his publisher's website at www.PublishAmerica.com, or through Amazon.com. It can also be special ordered through many bookstores.

After ten years of dealing with frequent interruptions of work, family, and occasional 'creative' dry periods, Steve Calkum, Soil Conservationist, Burlington Field Office, Burlington, CO, wrote and made public his first fantasy novel called *Freeborn*.

Freeborn is a tale about the life and adventures of a 1/2 elf named Freeborn who was adopted and raised by an elven woodsman named Tishamon.

Freeborn goes through a period where he has to learn to deal with the nonacceptance he receives from both humans and elven societies and eventually develops an awareness that true worth comes from within.



National Resources Inventory (NRI) Rangeland Field Study comes to Colorado

by Lars Santana, Rangeland Management Specialist, Montrose

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) Rangeland Field Study was conducted in Colorado and 20 other states this year.

The NRI is a statistically-based sample of land use, natural resource conditions, and trends on U.S. non-Federal lands. It is the most comprehensive database of its kind ever attempted anywhere in the world.

The rangeland onsite inventory is a special study or subset to National Resources Inventory.



From left to right are Brandon Sanders, Student Trainee, Steamboat Springs Field Office; Lars Santana, Rangeland Management Specialist (team leader), Montrose Field Office; and Paul Billig, Rangeland Management Specialist, Craig Field Office. Pictured above is the NRI team for Moffat and Routt Counties where 14 Primary Sample Units (PSU) were completed which is more than 3 weeks worth of field data collection. In all 88, PSUs were completed in Colorado.

Started in 2003, the rangeland on-site inventory is in its fifth year. In Colorado, six teams were set up to conduct the Rangeland Field Study.

Training has been completed for the data collectors involved in this year's rangeland on-site inven-

tory. Due to tight budgets, the Colorado NRCS decided to keep the data collection in-house after contracting out the data collection the last three years.

The first training session for the data collectors in the northwest Colorado took place in Meeker June 4th-7th.

The five data collectors involved in the training included Lars Santana, Rangeland Management Specialist, Montrose Field Office; Fred Cummings, Rangeland Management Specialist, Meeker Field Office; Paul Billig, Rangeland Management Specialist, Craig Field Office; Steve Jaouen, Rangeland Management Specialist, Glenwood Springs Field Office; and Brandon Sanders, Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) student, Steamboat Springs Field Office.

The second training for the data collectors in northeast Colorado took place in Akron, Colorado July 9th-12th.

This large group included Harvey Sprock, Area Range Management Specialist, Greeley Area Office; Stu McFarland, Soil Conservationist, Greeley Field Office; Nick Trainor, Rangeland Management Specialist, Greeley Field Office; John Fusaro, Range Conservationist, Ft. Collins Field Office; Julie Elliott, Range Management Specialist, Wray Field Office; Shaan Bliss, Range Management Specialist, Akron Field Office; and Charity Spadey, Farm Bill Administrative Clerk, Las Animas Field Office.

The final training involved the



Josh Saunders demonstrates how to lay out a plot to measure production on woody vegetation.

data collectors from the southeast and occurred in La Junta July 16th-19th.

This was a small group of data collectors and included Ben Berlinger, Area Rangeland Management Specialist, La Junta Area Office; Sarah Hanlon, SCEP student, Rocky Ford Field Office; Dan Nosal, Resource Management Specialist, Franktown Field Office; and Kim Diller, Rangeland Management Specialist, Cañon City Field Office.

Types of data collected included:

- Land cover/use
- Landscapes and soils
- Ecological site information
- Rangeland health
- Invasive/noxious plant presence
- Disturbance indicators
- Conservation practices and resource concerns
- Plant composition and patterns
- Plant production, cover, density, and height

The Lower Arkansas Watershed Plan

by Tim Macklin,
Southeast Colorado RC&D Coordinator

Watershed protection can be defined in many ways. Across Colorado, many unique approaches have improved water quality through enabling measures that reduce storm water runoff and soil erosion that could cause sediment, agricultural products, livestock waste, and other pollutants to enter streams, rivers, and other water bodies, which in turn can impact their beneficial uses.

A number of watershed pollutants such as sediment, nutrients, metals, and salinity affect the quality of the Lower Arkansas watershed.

In June 2007, the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) adopted water quality standards and use classifications for the Arkansas River (Regulation 32), emphasizing non-point source pollution controls for surface water and ground water as a priority, including the naturally occurring geological sources of salts, selenium, and iron.

Recognizing the rich agricultural and recreational history of the Lower Arkansas River Watershed, and the vast canal systems that have diverted and

distributed water of the Arkansas River to fields in the seven-county region over a hundred years ago, the Lower Arkansas Watershed Plan focus is on identification of water quality issues and reducing pollutants through identification and implementation of management strategies and solutions.

The Lower Arkansas Watershed Plan offers a vision of improving water quality by integrating watershed goals for sustainable community and agricultural development, water supply, fisheries, habitat preservation, flood control, and recreation.

This plan was initiated and developed by the Southeast Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) and the Lower Arkansas Watershed Improvement Association in a cooperative effort.

A broad range of participants have been encouraged to be involved with establishment of the watershed plan, identifying sources of pollutants in the watershed, as well as reduction goals for point sources and non-point sources of selenium, nutrients, and other pollutants flowing into the Arkansas River.

This community-based project involves landowners, industry, government, community organizations, and citizens from all facets of community life who have participated in the strategy development of the watershed management plan and the associated implementation strategies.

The result of the outreach efforts and cooperative think-tank has been the development of strategies to reduce pollutants from a variety of sources.

The Lower Arkansas Watershed Plan is in the final comment period and will be approved by January 1, 2008.

Sources of Pollutants

- Point Source Dischargers
- Non-point Sources
- Municipal Storm Water
- Industrial Storm Water
- Agricultural Activities
- Construction Activities
- Transportation Activities
- On-site Sewage Disposal Systems
- In-stream Processes
- Sub-basin Watershed Management Efforts

NRCS Employee Profile

CONSERVATION...

C.W. Scott, District Conservationist Fort Morgan Field Office

C.W. Scott is no stranger to NRCS. He began working for the agency as a student trainee in 1983 when it was named the Soil Conservation Service. He spent his entire career in Colorado, working first in Byers and then moving to Greeley as a Soil Conservationist for seven years before settling down in Fort Morgan as the District Conservationist.

After 24 years of service, C.W. still has a passion for the work he does for NRCS. C.W. has enjoyed working with the farmers and ranchers throughout the years and he looks forward to the many years to come where he can make a difference in conservation, the community, and the environment.

"In today's world of phone trees and internet, the most important thing we can do as an agency is to maintain face-to-face contact with our clients and that's what I enjoy doing," Scott said.



"The farmers and ranchers that I work with play a key role in all of our efforts in getting conservation on the land." --C.W. Scott



"Some of the things that keep my job interesting are all of the new types technologies and equipment that have come along in the last few years to assist with the soil surveys."

-- J.P. Pannell

J.P. Pannell, Soil Survey Project Leader Durango Field Office

J.P. Pannell is a Soil Survey Project Leader who has been with the NRCS for more than 57 years. He began working with the agency, then known as the Soil Conservation Service, as a student trainee in 1950. He became a full-time employee in 1951.

In his positions, J.P. has had the opportunity to travel all across Colorado fulfilling the backlog of soil survey needs. He has grown with the agency and is passionate about the work that he has done over his many years of service.

"It is fulfilling to see that soil survey, like all of those in the past, are put to good use in farm and ranch planning and all the other NRCS programs we work with," Pannell said.

Throughout the years, J.P. has enjoyed the opportunity to see a lot of different places and do many different things within the agency. To him, these milestones have made the many years that he has worked with the agency a worthwhile event.

OUR PURPOSE. OUR PASSION